(b) The Gulf region is in India's neighbourhood. Its importance from the political, strategic and economic points of view cannot be over emphasised. India shares with the Gulf countries a common desire for peace, stability and security in the region. In persuance of this objective, India has continued the tradition of high-level visits to UAE and other Gulf countries for a regular review of regional and bilateral issues.

Death of an Indian Girl in Singapore

4163. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that an eight years old Indian girl Saachi has been killed in a water park in Singapore ;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Singapore High Commission has extended any help to the aggrieved family in the time of extreme grief; and

(d) if no help has been extended, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On March 21, 2000, at about 2.15 PM Singapore time, two Indian girls Sukhna and Saachi were on a water ride called "Double Trouble" in the amusement park at Sentosa Island of Singapore. The two were riding on a rubber boat which overturned. Saachi got entangled inside the rubber matting and drowned. The exact cause leading to the drowning of Saachi is being investigated by the Singapore authorities.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Indian High Commission in Singapore extended all necessary help to the relatives of Saachi including transportation of her body to India and follow up with the Singapore authorities with regard to investigation into the incident.

Understaffed Bangalore Passport Office

4164. SHRI K. C. KONDAIAH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is fact that Bangalore Passport Office is understaffed;

(b) if so, the steps taken to provide the required number of staff; '

(c) whether there is any proposal to open more customer counters at said Passport Office; and